

**ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING**  
**CHURCH ANNIVERSARY SERVICE WITH COMMUNION**  
**10.30 AM 4<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2024**

**Rev Dr Julia Binney leading & Rev Dr David Wise preaching**

[www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk](http://www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk).

Find us on Facebook @ Abbey Baptist Church, Reading



**Theme:** Our Destiny, Our Mission (Revelation 7:9-17)

**Call to worship:**

Come, let us worship God,  
**whose love is unconditional,**  
**whose mercy never fails,**  
**whose goodness endures forever,**  
**whose faithfulness continues through all generations.**

**Hymn BP&W 553:**

Great is your faithfulness, O God my Father,  
You have fulfilled all your promise to me;  
You never fail and your love is unchanging;  
All you have been you for ever will be.

*Great is your faithfulness!*  
*Great is your faithfulness!*  
*Morning by morning new mercies I see;*  
*All I have needed your hand has provided,*  
*Great is your faithfulness, Father, to me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in eloquent witness  
To your great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that everlasting,  
Your living presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
These are the blessings your love will provide.

**A PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING:**

Loving and gracious God on this day of thanksgiving and celebration for the anniversary of this church, we praise you for who and what you are.

**We praise and worship you!**

We marvel at your love and care, your mercy and forgiveness, your faithfulness and guidance, your strength and support.

**We praise and worship you!**

We thank you for all the good things you have done for us in the past and the blessings you have showered upon us.

**We praise and worship you!**

We look forward to all you have for us in the future. We thank you for the challenges, the opportunities, the joys and for all you have planned for us.

**We praise and worship you!**

**Almighty God, for all you are, all you have been, and all you shall be, we praise and worship you, in the name of Christ. Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer:** *You are invited to pray in your own heart language*

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,**

**your kingdom come,**

**your will be done on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins,**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours**

**now and for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Family Time:** God's Amazing Jigsaw

*(There will be an offering taken during the following song, and after the song the children will leave us for their own groups)*

**Hymn MP 151:**

For I'm building a people of power,

And I'm making a people of praise

That will move through this land by My Spirit,

And will glorify My precious name.

Build Your church, Lord,

Make us strong, Lord,

Join our hearts, Lord, through Your Son.

Make us one, Lord,

In Your Body,

In the kingdom of Your Son.

DAVE RICHARDS © 1977 KINGSWAY'S THANKYOU MUSIC.

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

**BIBLE READING 1:** Ephesians 1:3-23

**BIBLE READING 2:** Revelation 7:9-17

**HYMN MP 1024:**

All my days I will sing this song of gladness,  
Give my praise to the Fountain of delights;  
For in my helplessness You heard my cry,  
And waves of mercy poured down on my life.

I will trust in the cross of my Redeemer,  
I will sing of the blood that never fails,  
Of sins forgiven, of conscience cleansed,  
Of death defeated and life without end.

*Beautiful Saviour,  
Wonderful Counsellor,  
Clothed in majesty, Lord of history,  
You're the Way, the Truth, the Life,  
Star of the Morning,  
glorious in holiness,  
You're the Risen One,  
heaven's Champion,  
And You reign, You reign over all!*

I long to be where the praise is never-ending,  
Yearn to dwell where the glory never fades,  
Where countless worshippers will share one song,  
And cries of 'Worthy' will honour the Lamb!

STUART TOWNEND © 1998 THANKYOU MUSIC/ CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING/ INTEGRITYMUSIC.COM

**SERMON:** Our Destiny, Our Mission - Revelation 7:9-17 (Abbreviated version in note form)

**Introduction**

I am a Baptist minister no longer in pastoral charge, I have been working in HE, and am now following completion of a doctorate that ... mentor Christian leaders, write for publication and speak at churches and conferences, as well as supporting the leaders in the Bap church where I am a member.

The core theme of Revelation is that whatever the appearance may be God is in control now and forever. The context of the church that John was writing was that they were facing discrimination and harassment. We know that when believers were brought to court, although being a Christian was not in itself illegal, they would be required to recognise Caesar as Lord and worship him or face torture and death. We know that some had already been killed.

Warning about my asking a couple of questions this morning.

**Before the Throne (v 9—17)**

**v9f;** These are two of my favourite verses in the whole of the Bible, a picture of heaven, our destiny. Every people group has believers who are there, this for me is amazing. Notice that in heaven our ethnicity and our language continue to be a part of who we are. This means that there is something about our ethnicity that is reflective of God, after all we are made in God's image. How do you feel about the fact that your ethnicity goes with you to heaven? **All are equally made in God's image.**

We will come to the white robes later, but the palm branches acknowledge Jesus as king. The purpose of this vision is to encourage believers, especially those facing persecution that this is their destiny and that nothing can keep them from it. Revelation written in order to encourage us as we live in the present. This is the destiny for all who serve God.

**v11—14;** The 24 elders stand for all of God's people and the four living creatures represent both the animate and the inanimate world. The 'great tribulation' is the period from Jesus' resurrection until the end of this world, some of the multitude were martyred most were not, all have had to endure living in a fallen world. Washing their robes in Jesus' blood to make them white is a bit of a mind-bending image. The point is that it is *Jesus' death* that gives them/us the clothes appropriate for heaven. It is not their own doing but God's.

**v15—17;** The image here is of being continually in the presence of the Living God. Spreading His tent over is an image of receiving His protection, being welcomed into His family. To understand the significance of these images you need to remember that they were written for churches in the Middle East 2000 years ago when famine was a regular occurrence and there was no air conditioning to escape the fierce heat. Jesus, the Lamb, will be our Shepherd taking care of us leading us to living water which represents eternal life with God 'wiping away every tear'. Mounce; 'the Lamb as heavenly shepherd leads His flock to the wellspring of life and wipes away the last trace of earthly sorrow'.

### **Mission**

Today is the celebration of your 384<sup>th</sup> church anniversary. At a church anniversary it is usual to both look back and thank God for our history and for those who have gone before us and laid the foundations that we build on today and to look forward and commit ourselves to what God is calling us to for our future. I am sure that part of what God is calling you to is to share the good news about God's love for all to people here in Reading. So here is my final question this morning. What is the good news for people in Reading found in the passage we have looked at this morning?

For 32 years I was a pastor at Greenford Baptist Church. Church transitioned from being an almost all White British congregation to one with people from approximately forty-five nationalities regularly attending. During worship different languages were used with songs, dance and prayer in styles that were used 'back home'. Every aspect of congregational life reflected the cultures from the different ethnicities that made up the congregation. The local MP, the leader of the borough council, a Mormon, local councillors including Muslims would come and be present in our Sunday meetings. Why, because they enjoyed being in an environment that was not just multi-ethnic but inter-ethnic. We saw Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs become Christians and be baptised. Church was an environment shaped by our destiny, people from all ethnicities felt fully welcome and accepted

### **Application**

What have we learnt this morning?

- We will stand before God's throne with people from every tribe and tongue
- Heaven is going to be good!
- Meanwhile we have good news to share with people.

**Song:** *From Revelation 7:9-10* - [https://youtu.be/Kqv0C1knBTY?si=NMP3m\\_KmqTegAELo](https://youtu.be/Kqv0C1knBTY?si=NMP3m_KmqTegAELo)

There's a sound that's breaking forth  
The sound of heaven upon the earth  
On every island, 'cross desert sands  
O'er highest mountains to distant lands.

It's the sound of worship coming alive  
As the voices of Your people unite  
And sing praises to Your powerful name.

Oh I can't wait for that day  
When every tribe and every nation  
Bow before the Great I AM  
A voice from every generation  
Crying "Worthy is the Lamb Oh Worthy is the Lamb"

Rich and poor, weak and strong  
Princes and paupers join the song  
From one blood we were made  
And by one blood we've been saved.

The blood of Jesus our Redeemer and friend  
His praise will have no end  
Let Your kingdom come  
Let Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven  
Let our worship rise  
Let our hearts unite on earth as it is in heaven.

WORDS & MUSIC BY STEVEN MUSSO PRODUCED BY JOSHUA FRERICHS VIDEO BY BENJAMIN BUSHEN

## **COMMUNION**

### **Words of Invitation:**

We are here to look back, here to look forward.

We are here to remember one who died, here to greet one who lives.

We are here to share bread and wine, here to share fellowship together.

We are here in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who invites us, as he invited his first disciples, to take supper with him.

He shared bread and wine with the one who would betray him, the one who would deny him, those would abandon him in his hour of need.

He shared bread and wine with those who couldn't stay awake with him even for an hour, those who were confused, full of doubt and fear.

He invites us to share bread and wine, you and I, who are weak and sinful, who daily deny him, who prefer our way to his, who have barely begun to understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Though your faith is frail, your faults are many, you have many questions and much to learn, come now and share bread and wine.

Come and receive life for your souls.

## **PRAYERS OF CONFESSION AND THANKSGIVING**

### **INSTITUTION:**

'The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,

"This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way after supper he took the cup saying,

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.  
(1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

This is the body of Christ, broken for you.

*(take a piece of bread and eat as it is served to you)*

This is the blood of Christ, shed for you.

*(we drink together once all have been served)*

**POST COMMUNION PRAYER:**

**Lord Jesus Christ, we have remembered your death.**

**We have celebrated your resurrection.**

**We rejoice in the wonder of your love.**

**Send us out to proclaim the good news to all people**

**so that they will know you died for them,**

**and in turn celebrate the new life you offer,**

**and the love you so freely give. Amen.**

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION:** Selina and Lam

(\*For the lines marked in bold, let's pray with our voices heard, thank you.)

Dear Father God,

Today we celebrate our Church Anniversary, and we are grateful to gather here to worship You.

Thanks to Your amazing grace, our congregation has grown more than tenfold in just a few years. Through Your love and care, we have transformed from a Church of solely white British members to an international Church rich in ethnic diversity. Because of You, our Church has become a refuge, a place of worship, and a community where brothers and sisters who love You dearly can meet. **Dear Lord, please accept our sincere gratitude for all You have done for us and for the Abbey International Baptist Church.**

We pray that You will revive Christianity not only here at our Church but also in Reading, throughout the United Kingdom, and across the world. In these uncertain times, when wars continue in various regions, and hatred and evil deeds prevail in different corners of the world, we need You, Lord. Only You can save us from the turmoil. **Dear Lord, please grant us peace and righteousness on Earth.**

Reading needs transformation. You have been so kind to our town, as many Christian charities are actively working here. Yet, we know more needs to be done. Many people are homeless, mentally unwell, addicted to drugs, or involved in shoplifting and violent behaviour. Dear Lord, please inspire the local councils and government to pursue effective measures for regenerating our towns and cities. **Dear Lord, we need Your blessings for Reading, the place we call home.**

Amongst Your people here at Abbey International Baptist Church, life is not always a bed of roses. Some are housebound due to their physical conditions, some are coping with pain and illnesses, some are missing family members who are far away, some are not pursuing their ideal jobs, and some are still seeking their destiny. We humans are so feeble and helpless. **Dear Lord, please strengthen our faith in You. Give us hope, wisdom and resilience to overcome our struggles.**

**Dear Father God, may Your be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. May Jesus Christ be our great teacher, showing others love through our deeds. May the Holy Spirit purify our hearts and souls to be more like You. Thank You, Lord. Amen.**

**Hymn BP&W 583:**

We are called to be God's people  
Showing by our lives His grace,  
One in heart and one in spirit  
Sign of hope for every race.  
Let us show how He has changed us,  
And remade us as His own;  
Let us share our life together  
As we shall around His throne.

We are called to be God's servants,  
Working in His world today;  
Taking His own task upon us  
All His sacred words obey.  
Let us rise, then, to His summons,  
Dedicate to Him our all,  
That we may be faithful servants,  
Quick to answer now His call.

We are called to be God's prophets,  
Speaking for the truth and right;  
Standing firm for godly justice,  
Bringing evil into light.  
Let us seek the courage needed,  
Our high calling to fulfil,  
That we all may know the blessing  
In the doing of his will.

THOMAS A. JACKSON (B. 1931)

**THE BLESSING:**

As you go, show God's love to all and live as true generous sons and daughters of your loving heavenly Father.

Seek God for all you need and fulfil his destiny for your life for the glory of God and the blessing of others.

And may the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you as you go today and always. Amen.

**THE GRACE:**

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.  
Amen.**

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Everyone is welcome to the Church Anniversary lunch today served in the Downstairs Hall

Dates for your Diary:

- **Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August – Traidcraft stall after the service**
- **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> September – Church Meeting after the service**

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